

# How to start your Expository Research Paper with an Introductory Paragraph:

("Expository writing" is writing that *explains* or proves something.)

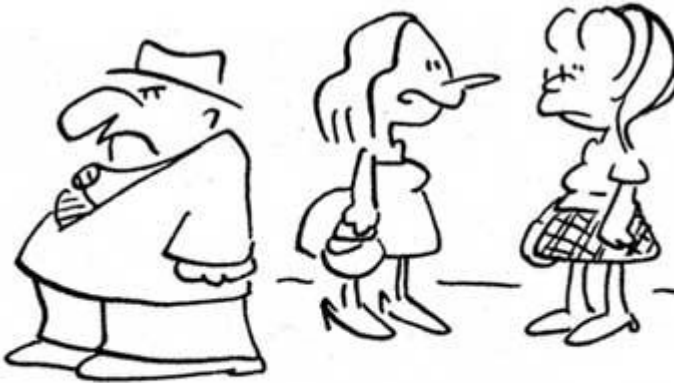
## What is an introductory paragraph in expository writing?

The introduction paragraph is the first paragraph of your essay.

## What does it do?

It introduces the main idea of your essay.

A good opening paragraph captures the interest of your reader and tells why your topic is important.



"Fred always makes a poor first impression — he says it saves a lot of time."

*Would you want your readers (including your teacher!) to read your paper's unimpressive first sentence or first paragraph and assume the rest is just as unimpressive? Should your teacher "save a lot of time" by not reading the rest of it and just "give you" a C or D as a grade?*

**OF COURSE NOT!**

*So make sure your intro sentence is interesting!*

## ***The Introductory Paragraph starts with a Great first Sentence!***

First impressions are so important. It is true that the first impression—whether it's a first meeting with a person or the first sentence of a paper—sets the stage for a lasting opinion.

The introductory paragraph of any paper, long or short, should start with a sentence that piques the interest of your readers.

In a typical essay, the first sentence leads into two or three sentences that provide details about your subject or your process. All of the sentences build up to your thesis statement.

The thesis statement is the main purpose/idea of the essay. The entirety of your paper hangs on that sentence. But its function is to be informative and direct. (This means that it's not normally very "exciting".)

## Your First Sentence

To get your paper off to a great start, you should try to have a first sentence that engages your reader. Think of your first sentence as a hook that draws your reader in. It is your big chance to be so clever that your reader can't stop.

As you researched your topic, you probably discovered interesting anecdotes (stories), quotes or trivial facts. This is exactly the sort of thing you should use for an engaging introduction.



## Things NOT to do in an introductory paragraph:

**Apologize.** Never suggest that you don't know what you're talking about or that you're not enough of an expert in this matter that your opinion would matter. Your reader will quickly turn to something else. Avoid phrases like the following:

In my [humble] opinion . . . I'm not sure about this, but . . .

**Announce your intentions.** Do not flatly announce what you are about to do in an essay.

*In this paper I will . . . The purpose of this essay is to . . .*

Get into the topic and let your reader perceive your purpose in the topic sentence of your beginning paragraph.

**Use a dictionary or encyclopedia definition.**

*According to Merriam-Webster's WWWebster Dictionary, a widget is . . .*

Although definitions are extremely useful and it might serve your purpose to devise your own definition(s) later in the essay, you want to avoid using this clichéd beginning to an essay.

**Dilly-dally.** Get to it. Move confidently into your essay. Many writers find it useful to write a warm-up paragraph (or two, even) to get them into the essay, to sharpen their own idea of what they're up to, and then go back and delete the running start. If you need to do that, that's fine... just make sure you delete all that unnecessary "warm up" wordiness later.

While the opening paragraph should indeed be written in such a fashion that would encourage the reader *to want* to read the paper, the introductory paragraph is supposed to serve as an introduction—or an overview—of what the paper is about.

## What should I put in my intro paragraph? How do I write it?

Begin with a "Hook" sentence to catch your readers' attention. Since your paper is going to be discussing details of a social issue, introduce any foundational or "background" information that is necessary for your reader to understand *first* before you get into the details. For example, you should provide a general definition for your social issue in your introduction topic. If you plan to discuss a specific type or form, you may want to briefly introduce the other types and forms as well. For example, if your research paper is focusing on **lung cancer**, in your introductory paragraph, you may choose to define "cancer", introduce the fact that there are many forms of cancer and *then* lead into the specific form you're going to be discussing (lung). If the general definition of your social issue requires additional explanation for better/clearer understanding, you should provide that as well. Lastly, your introductory paragraph should contain a thesis sentence which will introduce your three subtopics (details) of your topic. **The thesis is the core idea—focus--of the paper. It serves as the paper's purpose, or the reason for writing about a given subject.**

## Where does the thesis statement belong?

Typically, the thesis statement should be placed at the end of the introductory paragraph so that it directly leads into the body paragraphs which will further explain each subtopic mentioned in the thesis.

## End With a Good Beginning!

Once you complete a first draft of your paper, go back to re-construct your introductory paragraph. Be sure to check your thesis statement to make sure it still holds true and that it's worded in the order you discussed each subpoint in your body paragraphs. Then, double check your first sentence to give it some zing.

## Writing a Research Paper

### Structural Outline:

**INTRODUCTION:** Your introduction should include your thesis statement, purpose of the paper, and necessary background information.

### **BODY:**

- I. All paragraphs should begin with a main idea sentence (Topic Sentence), and ***then*** include the following:
  - A. Supporting/developing detail sentence
    - i. subdetail sentence for explication/ development
  - B. Supporting/developing detail sentence (if needed)
  - C. Example to support detail sentence
  - D. Explication of example—showing HOW it supports your idea.
  - E. Continue with as many paragraphs as you need for all of your main ideas using EXAMPLES for support.

**CONCLUSION:** Summary/Conclusion statement. Clear and appropriate concluding statement that states something about the thesis in light of the evidence used to support it.